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ABSTRACT

Part of an overall study of the nonverbal behavior of Chinese bilinguals consisted of research to determine the extent to which the perceptual patterns of bilinguals in a cross-cultural environment are affected by the manipulation of variables for topic, ethnicity, and language. Sixty-four female university students were interviewed on videotape by either a Chinese or an American partner, on either friendship or cultural differences, and in either English or Cantonese. Subjects completed a 20-item semantic differential scale on which they rated themselves and their partner. Results indicated that the subjects rated the American interviewers more positively than the Chinese interviewers, but had a marked preference for the use of Cantonese during the interviews. One plausible reason for the first result is that the subjects were English majors who by virtue of this choice were moving away from an ethnic enclosure and preservation mentality. (Author)

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THE IMPACT OF INTERVIEWER LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF CHINESE BILINGUALS

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Occasional Paper No. 96

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THE IMPACT OF INTERVIEWER LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF CHINESE BILINGUALS*

by

Herbert D. Pierson & Michael H. Bond

To what extent are the perceptual patterns of bilinguals in a cross-cultural environment affected by the manipulation of variables for topic, ethnicity, and language? To answer this question 64 female university students were interviewed on video tape by (1) either a Chinese or American partner, (2) on either friendship of cultural differences, (3) in either English or Cantonese. The Ss completed a 20 item semantic differential scale on which they rated themselves and their partner. Results indicated that the Ss (1) rated the American interviewers more positively than the Chinese interviewers, (2) but had a marked preference to use Cantonese during the interviews. One plausible reason for the first result was that the Ss were English majors who by virtue of this choice were moving away from an ethnic enclosure and preservation mentality. This research is part of an overall study of the nonverbal behavior of Chinese bilinguals.

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports empirical research on the nature of bilinguals' perceptions of self and others during face-to face interaction across linguistic and ethnic boundaries. Studies on the perceptions of

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* Text of a paper delivered at the Joint IACCP-ICP Asian Regional Meeting, Taiwan National University, August 10-12, 1981.

bilinguals have received impetus from the pioneering work of Lambert and his colleagues (Lambert, Frankel, and Tucker, 1966) at McGill University. The research paradigms proposed by Lambert during his investigation of French Canadians have prompted research in Hong Kong into the perceptual patterns of Chinese students who are presently being socialized in the markedly cross-cultural milieu of Hong Kong.

Since 1976 empirical research has been carried out on the perceptions of Hong Kong bilinguals in a cross-cultural context. Lyczak, Fu and Ho (1976) in a study of university students adapted a version of Lambert's "matched-guise technique" (Gardner and Lambert, 1972) to determine a measure of the attitudes Hong Kong bilinguals have toward English and Chinese speakers. The results pointed to the tendency on the part of the students to attribute traits involving strength of character to the Chinese guise, and to attribute traits involving success to English speakers. Pierson, Fu, and Lee (1980) obtained similar results in a study of the attitudes of secondary school students in a cross section of schools. The students ranked Westerners favorably on those stereotypes associated with commercial success, while Chinese were rated favorably on stereotypes such as trust, loyalty, and sincerity. Against this background of positive in-group evaluation, it is not surprising that a study by Yang and Bond (1980) indicated that Hong Kong bilinguals tend to affirm their

Chinese ethnicity when asked to fill out a questionnaire in English administered by a Westerner. This suggests that interaction with elements of Western culture presents itself as a threat.

However, these studies have had certain limitations. The communication which is perceived by Ss is impersonal and one-directional. Perceptions which are prompted by face-to-face communication, engaging all of one's verbal and nonverbal repertoire in both a first and second language, are missing.

The present study has been conducted in conjunction with research on nonverbal communication associated with speaking English and Chinese (Cantonese). The study is designed to examine whether ethnic groupings and stereotypes, evidenced by Lambert and the researchers already cited in this paper, affect perceptions during face-to-face communication in a way similar to one-way non-interactive communication. The paper also inquires as to whether effects on self-perception correspond to effects on perception of the partner, and whether the effects may be attributed to ethnic identity per se, as opposed to language spoken and topic of discussion.

In a similar study reported by Grujic and Libby (1979), ethnic and linguistic variables were manipulated to determine the effects on the perceptions of bilingual French Canadians living in Ontario. The researchers expected that the subordinate role of French Canadians in the predominantly English-speaking regions of Canada would produce a high degree of ethnic preservation and enclosure as reflected in perception

of self and others. We followed the same line of reasoning, since we thought that the colonial status of Hong Kong, which puts the Chinese in a role subordinate to the dominant British administrators, would have similar effects on the perceptions of Chinese bilinguals. We, therefore, hypothesized that in a conversational face-to-face interactive context Chinese bilinguals will:

1. Evaluate more positively a partner of Chinese ethnicity.
2. Evaluate a partner more negatively after interaction in English, regardless of the partner's ethnicity.
3. Evaluate themselves more negatively after speaking with a partner of American ethnicity, than after speaking with a Chinese partner.
4. Evaluate themselves more negatively after conversing in English, than after conversing in Chinese, regardless of the ethnicity of the partner.

METHOD

Sixty-four female English majors at The Chinese University of Hong Kong were recruited for this study. We specified that the Ss must be English majors in order to be reasonably certain they were bilingual and had some exposure to non-Chinese instructors. This was necessary because we are using the same Ss to study nonverbal behavior. In addition to the 64 Ss, we recruited four male research assistants. Two were Chinese bilinguals from other faculties at the university in their final year, and two were bilingual American exchange teachers. The two American

interviewers were not as fluent in Cantonese as the Chinese interviewers were in English. However, they both had training in Cantonese at language school and were able to communicate adequately. The Ss were interviewed by one of the research assistants for approximately five minutes in either Cantonese or English on the topic of either friendship or Chinese-Western cultural differences. The interviews were recorded on both audio and video tapes. There were eight major experimental conditions: 2 x (Language of Interview) 2 x (Ethnicity of Interviewer) x 2 (Topic of Interview).

The interviewers, regardless of their ethnicity, made their initial contact with the Ss in the language determined by the interview. Before the actual taped interview the Ss were requested to complete a form on their linguistic background and ability. After the interview the Ss completed a 20 item semantic differential scale for perceptions of self and the interviewer. The entire procedure from initial contact to completion of the questionnaire was held in the language determined by the experimental conditions.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Factor Analysis of the Ratings

In order to simplify the analysis of the 20 self ratings and interviewer ratings, separate factor analyses were run. A principal components analysis was used with a minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 set in determining the number of factors. The resulting factors were rotated to orthogonal structure using a varimax solution.

The analysis of self ratings yielded 6 factors, accounting for 68.6% of the matrix variance. The analysis of the interviewer ratings yielded 6 factors accounting for 78.1% of the matrix variance.

The criteria for including a scale in a factor for the analysis of variance were that it load $<.45$ on that factor and load less than .45 on any other factor. This procedure resulted in factors where there was a minimum of overlap with other factors. Each scale thus included was weighted equally in the analysis of variance for that factor. Table 1 indicates how the variables loaded on the factors using these criteria.

Interviewer Identity

In order to establish that interviewer identity did not interact with the other variables manipulated, the sample was divided into two, and separate analyses done on the Ss interviewed by the American and by the Chinese interviewers. Separate 2X (Language) 2X (Topic) 2X (Interviewer Identity) ANOVAS yielded no interactions at the .05 level involving interviewer identity across any of the self rating factors. For the interviewer rating factors there were two such interactions involving the Chinese interviewers. However, these interactions did not involve variables showing significant effects when the two groups were subsequently combined for overall ANOVAS and so need not concern us.

Given the general unimportance of interviewer identity, this variable was subsequently ignored. The two subgroups were combined and 2X (Language) 2X (Topic) 2X (Ethnicity) ANOVAS were then performed on the various self and interviewer factors across the 64 Ss.

TABLE 1

Factor Grouping for Self and Interviewer

			Self	Interviewer
1.	very weak _____	very strong	I	IV
2.	very alert _____	very sleepy	III	II
3.	very restrained _____	very free	I	
4.	very important _____	very insignificant	-IV	III
5.	very lowly _____	very respectable	VI	VI
6.	very lovable _____	very unattractive	II	III
7.	very shy _____	very confident	I	IV
8.	very enthusiastic _____	very bored		III
9.	very fluent _____	very halting	-I	I
10.	very vague _____	very precise	-V	
11.	very friendly _____	very unapproachable		I
12.	very insensitive _____	very aware	IV	V
13.	very natural _____	very unnatural	-I	I
14.	very deep _____	very shallow	II	
15.	very tired _____	very energetic	-III	-II
16.	very direct _____	very indirect	V	II
17.	very tense _____	very relaxed	I	IV
18.	very indifferent to the reactions of the interviewer _____	very responsive to the reactions of interviewer		
19.	very insightful _____	very common place	II	III
20.	very forthright _____	very restrained		I

Analysis of Variance-Self Ratings

Factor I (Confidence). There was a main effect for language ($F1, 56 = 4.66, p < .05$), with Ss reporting more confidence when using Cantonese ($\bar{X} = 4.86$) compared to English ($\bar{X} = 4.29$).

There was also a main effect for topic ($F1, 56 = 7.55, p < .01$), with Ss reporting more confidence when discussing friendship ($\bar{X} = 5.08$) than when discussing cultural differences ($\bar{X} = 4.21$). These two variables interacted ($F1, 56 = 4.01, p = < .05$). It is clear from inspecting the means that only when Ss discussed friendship in Chinese did they feel any increase in confidence. In confirmation of this observation, the language effect observed above holds only when the topic was friendship ($F1, 56 = 8.66, p < .01$), not when the topic was cultural differences ($F1, 56 < 1$, ns). Similarly, the topic effect occurred only when Chinese was used ($F1, 56 = 11.3, p < .001$) not when English was used ($F1, 56 < 1$, ns).

Factor II (Attractiveness). There were no significant effects for this variable.

Factor III (Alertness). There was an interaction between language and topic ($F1, 56 = 7.89, p < .01$)*. Ss felt more alert when using English compared to Chinese when discussing friendship ($F1, 56 = 9.77, p < .01$), but not when discussing cultural differences ($F1, 56 < 1$, ns). Also, Ss felt more alert when discussing friendship in English than when discussing

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* This interaction was also analyzed for simple main effects.

cultural differences in English ($F1, 56 = 4.11$, $p < .05$). There were no differences, however, in perceived alertness when discussing cultural differences in Chinese or cultural differences in English ($F1, 56 = 3.77$, ns).

Factor IV (Importance). There were no effects for this variable.

Factor V (Directness). There were no effects for this variable.

Factor VI (Respectability). There was a language effect ($F1, 56 = 7.87$, $p < .01$) with Ss feeling more respectable using English ($\bar{X} = 5.06$) than when using Cantonese ($\bar{X} = 4.53$).

Analysis of Variance-Interviewer Ratings

Factor I (Naturalness). There was a main effect for ethnicity ($F1, 56 = 8.26$, $p < .01$), with Ss reporting that the American interviewers ($\bar{X} = 3.39$) were more natural than the Chinese interviewers ($\bar{X} = 4.70$).

Factor II (Alertness). There was a main effect for language ($F1, 56 = 11.5$, $p < .005$), with Ss reporting that all the interviewers were more alert conversing in Chinese ($\bar{X} = 5.52$) than in English ($\bar{X} = 4.71$).

Factor III (Attractiveness). There was an interaction between ethnicity, topic, and language ($F1, 56 = 8.16$). When discussing cultural differences, the Americans using English were regarded as more attractive than the Chinese using English ($F1, 56 = 5.36$, $p < .025$). Also, when discussing cultural differences, the Chinese interviewers were perceived as more attractive when using Cantonese than when using English ($F1, 56 = 5.47$, $p < .025$).

Factor IV (Confidence). There was a main effect for ethnicity ($F1, 56 = 21.6$, $p < .001$), with Ss reporting that the American interviewers ($\bar{X} = 5.20$) were more confident than the Chinese interviewers ($\bar{X} = 4.11$).

Factor V (Awareness). There were no effects for this variable.

Factor VI (Respectability). There were three main effects (all F's 1, $56 = 4.05$, $p < .05$). The interviewer was perceived as more respectable when he was American ($\bar{X} = 5.16$) rather than Chinese ($\bar{X} = 4.69$), when he used English ($\bar{X} = 5.16$) as opposed to Cantonese ($\bar{X} = 4.69$), and when he discussed friendship ($\bar{X} = 5.16$) as opposed to cultural differences ($\bar{X} = 4.69$).

In addition, there was a three-way interaction ($F1, 56 = 7.94$, $p < .01$). This interaction indicated that for each of the main effects noted above, there were certain conditions under which the direction of the main effect was reversed.

DISCUSSION

The results of our data analysis reversed some of our original predictions. We had expected a strong ethnicity effect to emerge in the form of a negative evaluation of the American interviewers and positive orientation toward the Chinese interviewers. We did not find this ethnicity effect, but rather a positive ethnicity effect in the direction of the American interviewers. The data indicated that American interviewers were perceived as more natural, confident, and respectable than the Chinese interviewers. Therefore, hypothesis number one was not confirmed.

There are a number of plausible reasons for this effect. The study by Pierson, Fu, and Lee (1980) has suggested that secondary school students in Hong Kong rate Westerners more highly on stereotypes such as confidence and success because most of their exposure to Westerners is in the person of senior government officials and businessmen in the mass media. Although one can compare the situation in Hong Kong with that of Canada, there are major differences which might explain the absence of open hostility toward the colonial government of Hong Kong. Hong Kong is one of the last colonial regimes in the 20th Century and has a population which is 98% Chinese. However, because of its singular political and historical circumstances, and the fact of economic prosperity, there is at present no popular movement to replace the British colonial administration. Cross-cultural tensions and resentments do exist (The Hong Kong Observers, 1981), but they are generally subtle, and surface in letters to the newspapers about localization in the civil service, and movements such as the promotion of Chinese language in education. Also, a high degree of social distance separates the Western community from the Chinese community. However, this gap is bridged in commerce and government by linguistic "middlemen" (Luke and Richards, 1981). These are usually educated Chinese bilinguals who are to some extent bicultural. The Ss recruited for this study were by virtue of their education potential linguistic "middlemen".

These Ss had chosen English as their major field of study at the university. This choice in itself indicates a certain openness to other cultures. As the Ss were being exposed to English literature and language as a major focus of study by Westerners or Western-trained Chinese, they

were in the process of being acculturated to non-Chinese values and traits. This acculturation would suggest movement away from ethnic preservation and enclosure (Schumann, 1976).

These results are in contrast to the ethnic enclosure mentality which was suggested by the results of the Yang and Bond (1980) study of university students at the same institution. The reason for the differences is that we were required to recruit a homogenenous group of bilingual Ss for the study in preparation for our eventual analysis of nonverbal behavior. The study by Yang and Bond, on the other hand, recruited a mixed population of male and female students from various departments at the university whose link to each other was that they were taking an introductory course in psychology. One might reasonably predict that the general population of students at the university would produce effects more consistent with the original hypotheses.

There were also several main effects for language. The subjects reported that they felt more confident using Cantonese in the interviews as opposed to English. However, they also reported feeling more respectable using English during the interviews as opposed to using Cantonese. The first language effect was quite naturally expected. The second language effect probably reflects the high status that English has in Hong Kong and the fact that the Ss participating in this study are at present engaged in the study of English literature and language. The study by Lyczak, Fu, and Ho (1976) revealed similar effects, but the study by Pierson, Fu and Lee (1980) indicated that there is a tendency on the part of secondary students

in Hong Kong to deny that English is the mark of education and gives them higher status.

There was an additional language effect which indicated that the Ss perceived both the American and Chinese interviewers as more likable when they were using Cantonese as opposed to English. It is hoped that an analysis of the videotapes will give us more insight into this effect.

Fanon (1963) has mentioned personality factors which are characteristic of colonized people. He includes such features as self-hatred, self-denigration, dependent behavior, and a tendency to imitate the "colonizers." As in the study by Grujic and Libby (1979), we discerned none of these features in our Ss. This might be because our Ss were university students, and therefore, not representative of the population as a whole. A random sample from the general population might indicate something completely different. In general, we could say that hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 were disconfirmed.

There were also two main effects involving the topic variable. The Ss perceived themselves as more confident discussing the subject of friendship as opposed to cultural differences, and the Ss regarded the interviewers as more respectable when discussing friendship as opposed to that of discussing cultural differences. Somehow a discussion of cultural differences made the Ss feel uncomfortable. One plausible reason for this was that the questions about friendship were rather mild, while those about cultural differences were about some important, but

sensitive issues at the university. For example, the students were asked about housing on campus for exchange students at a time when there is not enough space for local Chinese students. They were also asked about hiring Chinese for local positions in government, the use of the "mother tongue" in education, and the advantages of having Western faculty members on campus.

The topic variable also entered into several interactions with the two other variables, language and ethnicity. Because of the complexity of these interactions, we decided to delay giving an explanation until we analyze the verbal and nonverbal behavior recorded on the videotapes. We hope this analysis will serve as a key for understanding and explaining these complex interactions.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study are still tentative in nature, and so it would be premature to make any generalizations about perception during cross-cultural interaction by all Chinese bilinguals. One must bear in mind that the present study is only one part of an overall study of the nonverbal behavior of Chinese bilinguals during face-to-face interaction. There are more analyses to be done. One involves a content analysis of the 64 interviews, the other involves an analysis of the nonverbal features of the interactions. We hope, therefore, that these further analyses will help us better understand and explain the initial results of perception of self and others, particularly in a cross-cultural context.

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